



Dear Writer,

Congratulations! You're coming to GSA this summer!

We couldn't be more excited for you at this point in your life. This is an important time. It's a chance to grow as a writer, to learn more about your craft and the arts, and to meet fellow creative people who share your interests. We say this as graduates of the program: these are three monumental and transformative weeks.

What to Expect

We will work on all aspects of writing, from finding ideas and writing drafts, to revising and polishing, to publishing and performing. We will help each other refine our strengths and tackle our obstacles as writers and push each other to experiment with new subjects and forms. We will look to add music, rhythm, form, and experimentation to your work. We will do all of this in small group workshops and individual conferences, in daily writing exercises, in sessions in which we read and comment on each other's work, and in visits from other working writers.

You will also have the opportunity to be exposed to other art forms and to participate in interdisciplinary activities. During your time at GSA, you will produce a body of work and assemble a chapbook. We will be working, too, on writing for the stage and how to present our work to audiences in public readings.

What We Expect from You

The two things we expect from you are curiosity and optimism. We expect you to be interested in working on your writing and in learning as much as you can. We expect you to be willing to revise, to try new things, and to consider comments from other writers. We expect you to listen attentively to other people's writing and comments, to our comments, and to our guest writers. Above all, we expect that you believe you can solve all the creative obstacles and hurdles in your way. We will work with you to do that.

Of course, we also expect you to be on time and to be ready to start work immediately. Classes are fast-paced and intense, and there's a lot we want you to learn. We expect you to take care of yourself before and during the program, so that you'll be able to keep up with the work and get as much out of the experience as possible. This means eating well and making sure you get enough rest. (We know it can be tempting, but don't have too much ice cream!)

What to Read Before You Come

You're a Kentucky writer, so we want you to become familiar with the work of other writers with roots as Kentuckians. Go to the local library or bookstore, visit authors' websites, find anthologies and journals, and check out works by several of these state writers: Nikky Finney, Kelly Norman Ellis, Wendell Berry, Sallie Bingham, Rebecca Gayle Howell, James Baker Hall, bell hooks, Mary Ann Taylor-Hall, Ellen Hagan, Erin Keane, Tania James, Bianca Spriggs, Katerina Stoykova-Klemer, Barbara Kingsolver, George Ella Lyon, Bobbie Ann Mason, Frederick Smock, Sena Jeter Naslund, Chris Offutt, Gayl Jones, Gurney Norman, Jeremy Paden, and ZZ Packer. By the way, this list is by no means exhaustive.

What to Bring

Lots of paper and pens, a notebook or journal you can carry around with you, and anything else you think you might need, such as a pocket dictionary or lucky pencil. Our visiting writers will also have copies of their work available for purchase, so bring a little money, too.

In the meantime, may your words flow and your excitement grow. Welcome to the tribe!

With all best wishes,

Dan Bernitt, Olivia Cole, and Shayla Lawson
GSA Creative Writing Faculty